

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6016

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Human Services & Corrections, February 23, 2007

Title: An act relating to good cause reasons for failure to participate in WorkFirst program components.

Brief Description: Concerning good cause reasons for failure to participate in WorkFirst program components.

Sponsors: Senators Regala and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 2/22/07, 2/23/07 [DPS-WM, DNP, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6016 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Regala, Vice Chair; Stevens, Ranking Minority Member; Marr and McAuliffe.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Carrell.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Brandland.

Staff: Shani Bauer (786-7468)

Background: As a condition of receiving federal funds for the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program (TANF), states are required to meet work participation rates for those families receiving TANF funds. Work participation rates are determined by dividing the number of families receiving TANF that are engaged in work activities by the total number of families receiving TANF.

The Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA) did not change the work participation rates, but made significant modifications to how the rate is calculated. First, a credit to the caseload was previously allowed for the reduction in the total caseload since the creation of the TANF block grant. This credit now only applies to reductions in caseloads since 2005. In short, the total caseload (denominator) of the equation is now much larger. Second, qualifying work

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activities are defined much more narrowly under the DRA, making the numerator much smaller using existing activities.

Federal regulation specifically allows states to exclude families in which a single custodial parent is caring for a child less than one year old from the work participation rate calculation. States may apply this exclusion on a case-by-case basis for families with a work-eligible individual up to a maximum of 12 months for the individual's lifetime.

Under Washington law, a "good cause" reason for a TANF recipient's failure to participate in Workfirst program components include cases in which the recipient is a parent with a child under the age of one year, except that when the child reaches the age of three months, the recipient must participate in one of the following activities for up to 20 hours per week:

- 1) instruction or training which has the purpose of improving parenting skills or child well being;
- 2) pre-employment or job readiness training;
- 3) course study leading to a high school diploma or GED; or
- 4) community service volunteer activity.

Summary of Bill: A parent with a child under the age of one year who is a TANF recipient has a good cause reason for the failure to participate in a Workfirst program. The requirement to participate in certain activities after the child reaches the age of three months is eliminated.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY RECOMMENDED SUBSTITUTE AS PASSED COMMITTEE (Human Services & Corrections): DSHS may require any recipient with a child under the age of one year whose comprehensive evaluation indicates a need for mental health, alcohol or drug treatment to cooperate with that treatment, as appropriate, up to twenty hours per week. A recipient may participate in the Work First program on a voluntary basis.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Substitute requested on February 23, 2007.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: It is difficult for parents to participate in programming during the first year of a child's life due to the health of the child and the child's development. This bill would allow a parent to stay home with that child for the first year of the child's life. The cost of child care is an additional barrier. The state can accommodate this change within the parameters of the federal law.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Robin Zukoski, Columbia Legal Services; Rachel Frazier, Welfare Rights Organizing Coalition.